PROFESSIONAL COMMENT

Choice of Main Entry in Map Cataloging

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The library is an information center. Its function is to collect, organize and provide materials containing information. The responsibility of a cataloger is to organize library materials in a way that they can be retrieved by users. In order to achieve this goal, various access points to materials such as author, title and subject heading are provided in the library catalog. The main entry is the cataloger's first choice among all the possible access points to the material. The choice is based on assumption that when a user is trying to retrieve material, the chosen main entry is the most common and sensible approach. In cataloging, when the main entry is chosen, the bibliographic description of the material is entered under the main entry. The choice of main entry also can influence the call number, therefore it has an impact on how the material will be shelved in the library, and thus, its accessibility.

In practicing cataloging, the main entry is chosen according to certain cataloging manuals or rule books such as the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules. Usually, the main entry is the author, either a personal author or a corporate body. If the authorship is uncertain or unknown, the title serves as the main entry. In certain special cases, the main entry can also be a uniform title, such as "Bible" for Bibles; "United States. Laws, statutes, etc." for United States laws.

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Maps have been essential reference tools in libraries for a long time. They have been used by kindergarten children as well as research scholars. Yet, there is still much controversy surrounding the choice of main entry in map cataloging. The controversy is whether the main entry for the map should be author, title or geographic area. Each possibility shall be discussed in the following paragraphs.

I. Author as main entry,

In 1876, Charles Cutter compiled the *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, a book that has become a milestone in the history of cataloging. Contained in the book is a section devoted to maps and atlases. The section begins with the statement: "The cataloging of maps and atlases differs very little from the cataloging of ordinary books." For ordinary books, the author is used as the main entry, therefore for maps, the cartographer should be the main entry. *ALA Cataloging Rules for Author and Title Entries*, published in 1949, states: "Enter a map under the name of the person or corporate body responsible for the content of the map, as, cartographer, editor, publisher, government bureau, society or institution." * Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* published in 1967, states: "A map, a series or set of maps, ..... is entered under the person or corporate body that is primarily responsible for its informational content." Again, in the * Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*, 2nd edition, 1978, states the definition of personal author in Rule 21.1A1: "... cartographers are the authors of the maps." Supporting these traditional main stream cataloging rules is the practice of the Library of Congress of the United States. While these authorities maintain that the author should be the main entry for the map, it is not generally agreed upon by most map librarians.

For old and rare maps, there is a general agreement that the cartographer should be used as the main entry, because these maps are usually identified with the cartographers. However, for other maps, the author is not a suitable choice for the
main entry. The reason is that the primary identification of maps is with geographic areas rather than authors. Most map users are interested in whether or not the collection contains a map of a certain area, rather than a map by a certain cartographer. In other words, the patron is likely to seek for maps in the catalog by geographic areas instead of cartographers. Since the fundamental principle of cataloging practice is focused on serving the readers, to use the author as main entry for a map is not a satisfactory choice.

From a librarian’s point of view, establishing the authorship of a map is not an easy task. The parties responsible for the existence of a map include the surveyor, the cartographer, the engraver, the publisher, etc. Even if it is decided that the cartographer is the author, it is not easy to locate the name of the cartographer on the map, since maps usually do not have a title page. Many maps do not even clearly indicate who is the cartographer. To a cataloger, the research and decision making involved in establishing an author as the main entry for a map is time consuming, yet the result is of little value to a patron.

II. Title as main entry,

Title as the main entry is not a popular practice, simply because most maps do not have a distinctive title. In 1973, the Canadian Library Association published Nonbook Materials, The Organization of Integrated Collection by Jean R. Weih, Shirly Lewis and Janet Macdonald. This book states: “Maps are entered under title.” and “If no title appears on the face of the map, a title is supplied in square brackets from accompanying materials or outside sources.” Since maps usually do not have a title page, and map titles are usually vague and incomplete, to require a cataloger to establish a title entry under such circumstances is very time consuming.

From a patron’s point of view, there are so many map titles which start with “Map of . . .”, “New Map of . . .”. To
locate a map in the catalogue by title is like playing musical chairs. Therefore, the title certainly is not a sensible choice as the main entry of a map.

III. Geographic area as main entry.

It should be emphasized that there are characteristic differences between books and maps. Because there are many parties responsible for the existence of a map, it is not easy to establish a map’s authorship. Because most maps lack title pages, it is not easy to establish a distinctive map title. It should also be emphasized that there is a difference between a patron’s approach towards a book and a map. Most patrons are not interested in the author or the title of a map, but are interested in the geographic area covered by the map. For these reasons, to use the geographic area as the main entry not only saves a cataloger’s time, but also serves the user’s interest.

Many map libraries use the geographic area as the main entry in cataloging. Among them are the National Geographic Society, the American Geographical Society and the British Museum. A well accepted manual for map cataloging which uses geographical area as the main entry is *The Classification and Cataloging of Maps and Atlases* by Samuel W. Boggs and Dorothy Cornwell Lewis, published by Special Libraries Association in 1945. Boggs and Lewis use geographic area followed by subject and date as the main heading of the map cataloging. To include subject in the heading is convenient for the users who are looking for special subject information provided by maps. Besides, there are so many maps entered under areas such as United States, Great Britain, etc., breaking down in subject would make the search easier. Date is also an important element of heading, because as time progresses, the political situation changes, the boundary lines change, the lay out of railroad and highway changes..... Therefore, heading with geographic area, subject and date is easy
and clear for the patron to use.

When geographic area is used as the main entry, there are four aspects should be examined. First, a list of form headings for geographic areas should be established and followed consistently. In deciding the form of headings, again, there is controversy. Whether the direct approach to the local area or the indirect approach that follows the hierarchy of jurisdiction is better. In other words, the heading of a local area map should be the local area followed by the name of the larger geographic entity in which it is located, e.g. New Brunswick, Middlesex County, New Jersey, or should it be in the reverse order, New Jersey, Middlesex County, New Brunswick. The direct approach to the local area is very appealing to the reader. A patron who consults a specific area has no need to be referred to a broader area. For example, when a patron needs to consult a New Brunswick map, most likely he would look under New Brunswick instead of New Jersey. On the other hand, to a cataloger, the indirect approach of listing the larger geographic entity first, then followed by the local area seems to be more logical. With this approach, maps of different local areas belong to the same larger entity can be easily kept together on the shelf.

According to the article, Development in Map Cataloging at the Library of Congress, written by Janet S. Hill, appeared in the April, 1977 issue of Special Libraries, the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division has proposed to the Subject Cataloging Division a "reversible subject heading" system for works classed in G1000-G9999 (Library of Congress classification numbers for atlases and maps). With this practice, the map of Middlesex County, New Jersey can be traced by two subject headings: (1) Middlesex, New Jersey-Maps, and (2) New Jersey-Middlesex-Maps. This idea may serve as a solution for the controversy over geographical form headings. If the heading of a map is the indirect larger geographic entity approach, a subject heading with direct local area approach should also be provided. If the direct approach to local area is preferred in the main entry, then a subject heading of larger geographic
entity approach should be provided. In either case, it is important that the call number should be arranged in a way that maps of local areas belong to the same larger entity should be kept together on the shelf. In other words, call number should be designed to place maps of cities of the Middlesex County together, and maps of counties of New Jersey together.

The second aspect to be examined is how to deal with the change of geographic names. Same geographic areas often change names due to political reason. For instance, Zaire was Congo. For a map of that area, main entry should be Zaire or Congo? A good practice to follow is the latest form of the name is preferred; however, if the map deals with area during the period of an earlier name, the earlier name is preferred. Of course, cross references should be provided between earlier and later names. For example, if a user is interested in the Congo, he would look for maps listed under the heading "Congo" instead of "Zaire". Therefore, a map deals with the Congo period should use Congo as main entry. A cross reference of "see also Zaire" should be made under "Congo", in order to lead the user to a more comprehensive search if necessary. However, it must be cautioned that in classification, attention should be given so that the maps of the same geographic area with different names are kept together.

The third aspect concerns how to interfile map catalog cards with the rest of cards in the public catalog. Although the main entry of maps are geographic names instead of authors and titles, it would not create a problem in filing. In a dictionary catalog, many main entries are corporate bodies which start with geographic areas, such as: "United States. Department of Agriculture", "New Jersey. Bureau of Commerce", etc. There are also form titles which start with geographic areas, such as: "United States. Laws statutes, etc." and subject headings which start with geographic areas, such as: "China—Foreign relations—United States". However, if interfile of cards for various materials is desired, the word "map" should be added after the geographic names in map headings. By doing so, all the catalog cards for maps of
one particular geographic area would be filed together.

The last aspect concerns old and rare maps. It has been pointed out earlier in this paper that the author is a good choice as the main entry for rare maps, because they are usually identified with their authors. If the geographic area is also used as the main entry for rare maps, an alternative would be to make an author added entry for maps published before a certain date, e.g. 1800. Otherwise the rule can be made as such: for maps published before 1800, use author as main entry, and provide geographical approach with subject headings.

Many catalogers refer to maps as "headaches". In the mean time, many readers have difficulty in locating maps in a library collection. One of the main reasons is that major cataloging codes such as ALA Cataloging Rules, AACR and even the newly published AACR 2nd ed. insist on using the author as the main entry for the map. Map cataloging can be more agreeable and meaningful if geographic area is the choice of the main entry.

Footnotes


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